

*The Historical Trail 1985*



SYLVIA HARRINGTON

# The Historical Trail

YEARBOOK OF THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF THE  
SOUTHERN NEW JERSEY ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF  
THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

## FOREWORD

As I greet you in this 16th issue of THE HISTORICAL TRAIL I am happy to share with you some exciting events that will be taking place during the sesquicentennial of our conference. You will find these plans in an article written by Fred W. Price, the chairman of the Bishop's Task Force on Historical Celebrations. Elwood Perkins brings to us John Wesley's feelings toward the mistreatment of various groups of people. In this article we see clearly our responsibility as United Methodist to follow Wesley's leadership in treating all of God's people with love and kindness.

The United Methodist Women presented an excellent program on the outstanding United Methodist Women. Some of these women are highlighted in an article by Penny Moore. A church that was organized in the Methodist Protestant tradition came into existence immediately following the establishment of the Methodist Protestant Church. This church is Mt. Zion United Methodist Church of Mantua Township. David Engelbrecht shared this article with us.

Your writings are always welcome as we travel The Historical Trail together.

DR. J. HILLMAN COFFEE  
*Editor*

## COVER PHOTO

Pictured is Sylvia Harrington who went to China as a missionary in 1917 from the First Methodist Episcopal Church of Collingswood, New Jersey and its conference.

## SESQUECENTENNIAL OF NEW JERSEY METHODISM

by  
Fred W. Price

Like a circuit rider hard on the heels of a migrating nation, comes a celebration among New Jersey Methodists second only to American Methodism's Bicentennial. In 1986 we will celebrate our sesquicentennial—150 years of New Jersey Methodism. The General Conference of 1836 made New Jersey a separate conference.

New Jersey Conference shall include the whole state of New Jersey, Staten Island, and so much of the states of New York and Pennsylvania as is now included in the Asbury District.<sup>1</sup>

The New Jersey Conference has changed since 1836. In 1856 it became two conferences. As New Jersey Methodists gather for Annual Conference in 1986, we will gather not only to sing, "And Are We Yet Alive;" not only to legislate and plan for the future; not only to be cheered and encouraged by our reunions of fellowship, but also to remember an unbroken fellowship with hearty, pioneer, Methodists who made possible the marvels of Methodism we enjoy today. This unbroken line began with New Jersey's First Conference April 26, 1837 at Halsey Street Methodist Episcopal Church in Newark, New Jersey with Bishop Beverly Waugh presiding.

The tragedy of our sesquicentennial celebration will be that many devoted servants of Jesus Christ will remain forgotten and unappreciated. Some events of great, even eternal, significance will remain buried beneath the dust of time's advance. The hope, however, is that some persons and events will be remembered, discovered and shared in this sesquicentennial year.

The first conference of American Methodists held at Philadelphia in 1773 recorded only 200 members in New Jersey; in 1836 there were 17,600; and today, there are over 86,000 in Southern New Jersey, but statistics are dull and lifeless. By themselves, they could never tell the story of New Jersey Methodism. Here are a few, brief sketches.

### *Sketches of New Jersey Methodism*

#### A MILITARY VISITOR

Suddenly the small society in New York became aware of stranger among them. Dressed in the military uniform of Great Britain, he came

complete with sword and green eye patch worn over his right eye. This soldier of the British Crown, identified himself as one of Wesley's followers and as a "Good Soldier of the Lord Jesus," and it was not long before his preaching was heard gladly. He always began his sermons by reverently laying his sword on the pulpit. He was instrumental in helping to build Wesley Chapel in New York, and in the purchase of Old St. George's in Philadelphia. This early hero of Methodism was often in New Jersey and had a profound effect upon our history. The churches of Burlington, Pemberton and Trenton, the oldest of our organized churches, can all claim Captain Thomas Webb as their organizer.

#### A RUSTIC DREAMER

"Like Bunyan, he had a rude, robust, but holy soul, profound in the mysteries of the spiritual life; . . . He was a great dreamer, and his 'visions of the night' recorded with unquestionable honesty, were often verified by the most astonishing coincidences. He was an evangelical Hercules, and wielded the word as a rude irresistible club rather than a sword. His soul seemed pervaded by a certain magnetic power . . . frequently prostrating the stoutest opponents in his congregation."<sup>2</sup> This rude rustic was preaching in Southern New Jersey before the formation of the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1784. Long before "physical manifestations" were associated with Methodist preaching, it was not uncommon for many of his hearers to fall to the ground humbled by a power they could neither foresee, nor resist. He came from the area of Salem, New Jersey and the remains of Benjamin Abbott are buried there.

#### A SOLDIER'S CONVERSION

A veteran of the Revolutionary War, this young man was riding on the road to Mt. Holly. What had started out to be a simple trip became a journey into destiny. He became aware of another rider, Caleb B. Pedicord, a Methodist circuit rider, who was singing one of the Methodist hymns. Unobserved by Pedicord, the young soldier followed listening to the singing all the while. His heart was touched. Shortly thereafter, he was to number himself among the misunderstood Methodists. In time, he became a preacher, an elder, a presiding elder and a leader of early American Methodism. The most complete account of the Christmas Conference, at which the Methodist Episcopal Church was formed, comes from this New Jersey native. In Salem, New Jersey rest the remains of Thomas Ware.

#### A VOICE FOR THE LAITY

It may be hard for some to believe, but there was a time when laity had little or no voice in the operation of the Methodist Episcopal Church. From the Christmas Conference of 1784 on, control of the Church rested in the hands of the clergy. For most Conference meetings, when business was under discussion, the doors were closed against all but itinerating preachers, or from 1812 on, their elected representatives.

Clergy believed they were not only to preach, but also to rule. Despite the background of the American Revolution, Methodist clergy were either unaware of, or unresponsive to the cause of lay participation in the operation of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

But something momentus was to happen on February 15, 1821 in Trenton, New Jersey. On that date a periodical called, *The Wesleyan Repository and Religious Intelligencer* appeared for the first time. It would last only three years, but its significance is trumpeted each time a lay person speaks or votes in an Annual or General Conference. *The Wesleyan Repository* said it would be open to "... essays as relate to church governments, discipline, administration and usages. . ."<sup>3</sup> In other words, it would welcome discussion about how the church was governed; since, *The Methodist Magazine*, the official church publication of the time, was closed to any discussion of Church Government.

For the first time anywhere in print, *The Wesleyan Repository* would call for lay representation in the government of the Methodist Episcopal Church. The magazine would move to Philadelphia for its second and third years, but during its brief life it was a primary voice for the rights of laity and church reform.

Whether *The Wesleyan Repository* hastened or delayed the advent of lay representation is, quite frankly, open to debate. It is the author's opinion that it hastened lay rights. Still, lay representation would not be realized in the Methodist Episcopal Church, South until 1870, and in the Methodist Episcopal Church (North) until 1872. Women would have to wait still longer. Laity were not fully admitted into Annual Conferences until 1932. In the battle for the rights of laity, however, there can be no doubt that of the the first and most powerful voices raised was that of *The Wesleyan Repository*. The Burlington born, New Jersey native who published it would leave the Methodist Episcopal Church to help form the Methodist Protestant Church after 1828. That denomination gave equal representation to the laity right from the beginning.

This noble soul who believed in and fought passionately for the rights of laity was laid to rest in the Methodist Episcopal Church Cemetery in the town of his birth, Burlington, New Jersey. Any who wish to pay their respects will find his grave marked with a stone that bears the name of William S. Stockton.

#### YESTERDAY AND TODAY MEET

Born near the beginning of the nineteenth century in Cookstown, New Jersey, he was converted at a camp meeting in Wrightstown and licensed to preach from the church in Pemberton. He became one of the leading forces in New Jersey Methodism. Those who heard him preach, considered him a great orator. It was not uncommon for thousands to flock to hear him. He was magnificent as a camp meeting preacher. He served as a presiding elder, the equivalent of our district superintendent, in what was the East and West Jersey Districts. Each of those districts was approximately one half of the state of New Jersey. He travelled incessantly. His efforts brought thousands to faith and to membership in the Methodist Church. He was known to be a good administrator and an ardent seller of Methodist literature. Later in life, he would become Corresponding Secretary for the Mission Society. He was well suited for such a responsibility. He had always carried a deep concern for missions and the salvation of men and women. He travelled around the country speaking and raising money for missions. The fruit of his labors would be seen in an unusual fashion nearly a century and a half later.

Ten years ago, he was a total stranger to the Southern New Jersey Conference. I first met him in Juliustown, New Jersey. He had come to talk about the work of Methodist Missions. In a small group, as the evening wore on, he was able to share with an uncommon power the work of Jesus Christ through Methodist missions. He shared something of his background. How his family had escaped the communists. How he himself had been used in ministry. He talked of his continuing ministry as he served in one of our local churches. He continues to serve this Conference. He does not have a single church, but many, many churches. His name is George Wang, District Superintendent of the Southeast District.

While Dr. Wang was serving that first church in our Conference, he preached a very special sermon on how the past and present can come together. He told of the labors of a great and gifted man from New Jersey who nearly a century and a half before had been the Corresponding Secretary of The Mission Society. He told of how he and his

family had felt the influence of this man. The sermon was entitled, "From Pitman to Pitman." Some, no doubt, would say it was nothing more than a coincidence. Others would say, "If it was a coincidence, it was a divine coincidence," because the first church served by Dr. Wang was Pitman United Methodist Church in Pitman, New Jersey. The Corresponding Secretary of the Mission Society who had influenced Dr. Wang and his family was Charles Pitman. Pitman is considered by many the greatest of many outstanding New Jersey Methodists.

In the lives of District Superintendent Wang and Presiding Elder Pitman, the past and the present meet. They have shared a spiritual oversight for the same area of New Jersey. It should not be seen as unusual. The past and the present often come together. Unfortunately, sometimes we miss it. We fail to see the wind of the Spirit blowing the dust of time away, thus, allowing the past to shine brilliantly as a part of the present. It would be a shame if in this sesquicentennial year we were to allow the past to slip by unobserved and unappreciated. It is so rich and has so much to share with us about ourselves and who we are as United Methodists. To help assist us in taking proper notice of the past in our sesquicentennial year, The Bishop's Task Force on Historical Celebration's is planning a number of events. We wish to share them with you well in advance so you can be sure to be a part of them.

#### *Plans For The Sesquicentennial*

#### SESQUICENTENNIAL MINUTES

Late in 1985 each church will receive a series of significant historical sketches from New Jersey Methodism's history. Local churches who wish may share these with the members of the congregation.

#### WORSHIP SERVICE OF NEW JERSEY MUSIC

New Jersey has been responsible for a great deal of Christian music. A worship service featuring the special music of Southern New Jersey Methodists is being prepared. Churches may use this service on Heritage Sunday, or any other time of the year they might choose.

#### HISTORY OF NEW JERSEY METHODISM

The Rev. Mr. Robert B. Steelman has written, "What God Has Wrought: A History of the Southern New Jersey Conference of The United Methodist Church." Commissioned and published by the Commission on Archives and History, this will be one of the outstanding events of the sesquicentennial year.

#### **AN ORIGINAL DRAMA**

The Bishop's Task Force on Historical Celebrations has completed arrangements with Dr. Joseph Robinette, award winning professor at Glassboro State College, for the writing of an original drama based on the history of the Conference. Staffed and performed by Methodists of Southern New Jersey, this play will be premiered at Annual Conference in 1986. A video cassette of this production will be available; as well as the script itself, which may be used by local congregations to do their own local productions.

#### **AUDIO-VISUAL HISTORY**

In addition to the drama, we are preparing an audio visual of the Conference history which will be appropriate for confirmation and membership classes, as well as, local church historical groups.

#### **AN ORIGINAL WORK OF ART**

The Task Force will be commissioning an original oil painting to depict the landing of Boardman and Pilmoor, Wesley's first missionaries to America, at Gloucester Point. The painting, when completed, will become the property of the Commission on Archives and History of the Southern New Jersey Conference and will be made available for viewings around the Conference; as well as, around the country.

#### **SIGNIFICANT PERSON OR PERSONS IN LOCAL CONGREGATIONS**

In order that each congregation may have a tangible way of participating in the sesquicentennial, we will be gathering information on the significant person or persons in the history of local churches. As the information is gathered, it will be assembled and made available to the churches of the Conference.

As can be readily seen, we are not planning a great many activities. We hope what we are planning will be significant and of lasting value. On behalf of the Bishop's Task Force on Historical Celebrations, come join us in an unbroken Methodist fellowship as together we celebrate 150 years of New Jersey Methodism.

#### **ENDNOTES**

1. Methodist Episcopal Church, *Journals of the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, vol. I: 1796-1836 (New York: Carlton and Lanahan, n.d.), p. 472.
2. Abel Stevens, *A Compendious History of American Methodism* (New York: The Methodist Book Concern, n.d.), p. 85.
3. The Editor, "Editor's Address," *The Wesleyan Repository and Religious Intelligencer* I (February 15, 1821), p. 3.

## OUTSTANDING UNITED METHODIST WOMEN MADE HISTORY

by  
Penny Moore

The Bicentennial year 1984 was a year in which many of us were caught up in the exciting research of people, places and events of historical significance within our Southern New Jersey Conference. I was but one who did research and I am indebted to so many others who discovered some of the Outstanding United Methodist Women. I would like to tell you about a few who made history.

Lucilla H. Green Cheney was born in Lambertville, N.J. on July 15, 1853. Her father was Rev. E. Green. She graduated from the Pennington Seminary in July 1870 with the highest honors in her class and went on to the Woman's Medical College in Philadelphia, Pa. to study medicine, graduating in March of 1875, again with distinguished honors. She served as assistant to the resident physician for a short time but when she received a call from the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society to serve as a medical missionary in India, she agreed to go and sailed for that country on January 1, 1876. Her place of work was Bareilly, India where she quickly mastered the language and set to work ministering to the needs of the people. Letters received by her father speak of the great success of her mission. While there, she fell in love with and married Rev. N. G. Cheney, an American missionary serving in Ninai Tal. They were wed in 1878 and only six months after she was married, she became ill with the Asiatic cholera and died as a result of this illness. Her work was acclaimed at home and abroad.

Jeanette Crippen Fisk was the wife of Clinton B. Fisk and is best known as the first President of the New Jersey Conference Woman's Home Missionary Society (WHMS) when it was organized in New Brunswick on March 20, 1885. She must have been a wonderful president because she was elected to succeed Lucy Webb Hayes (wife of the president, Rutherford B. Hayes) as our National President of the Woman's Home Missionary Society. Prior to that, she served the WHMS as Secretary of the Bureau for the West Central States. One of her great interests was the National Training School for Christian Workers which was connected to the Bethany Hospital in Kansas City, Kansas. So outstanding was her work there, that this school was later renamed the Fisk Bible and Training School in her honor.

Serving with Mrs. Fisk as Corresponding Secretary for the New Jersey Conference WHMS, was Hannah S. C. Garrison, wife of the Rev. Charles F. Garrison and daughter of Rev. Philip Cline. She graduated from the State Normal School in Trenton and the Literary and Scientific Circle at Chautauqua in 1885 where she was an excellent student. She became president of the New Jersey Conference Woman's Home Missionary Society, succeeding Mrs. Jeanette Crippen Fisk. She was also interested in the work of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union and held offices at various times in State, County and Local Societies. Always seeking new avenues of work for the Lord, she became aware of the need for Methodist minister's wives to have closer ties and an organization that, despite itineration with their clergy husbands, would help to fill their needs and a place where ideas could be shared. So it was that on March 23, 1903 at Asbury Park Methodist Episcopal Church, she called together a group of clergy wives with the purpose of beginning the Sisterhood which was organized at the meeting. She served as the first president. Eight years later, the Benefit Branch was added to provide a gift of money to a member at the death of her husband. We are familiar with this group today under the name of Wesley Fellowship. How little did she know that this would be a vital, growing source of help and fellowship to all clergy wives in this Conference.

What about outstanding women missionaries from our Conference? Do you know the name of Mrs. Dallas Lore? We do not know her first name but we do know that she and her husband were missionaries to Buenos Aires from 1847 to 1854. They returned to Auburn, New York where he edited the Northern Christian Advocate and at his death, she returned to New Jersey—perhaps Mauricetown—where she served as an early Corresponding Secretary of the Women's Foreign Missionary Society. She was responsible for planning the itineraries for missionary speakers. In one letter she wrote, "I came from Vineland yesterday and on the way took six railroad trains, three hacks, and two stage carriages, besides a family carriage—a varied experience, but a successful day's work, arranging for Miss Cushman in Camden, Burlington, Bordentown and Pemberton."<sup>1</sup>

To name a few others—

Rachel K. Weatherby went to India as a missionary in 1865  
Emma Knowles—a missionary to India in the 1880's  
Sophia J. Coffin—missionary to Africa in 1907  
Edith Britt—a missionary to India in 1916  
Sylvia Harrington—a missionary to China in 1917

Women were making history as outstanding deaconesses also. For instance, Sarah Heisler was a member of the Broadway Methodist Episcopal Church in Camden when she became a deaconess in 1908 and was assigned work in Patterson, New Jersey where she established a church and a church school for Italian immigrants.

Matilda Hoagland was a deaconess working in Trenton when she was honored for making over 1200 home visits and spending over \$500.00 for the needy while working for the Women's Home Missionary Society.

These were but a few women recognized at the Centennial program of the Conference United Methodist Women when they met on the Music Pier at Ocean City, New Jersey on September 23, 1984. In conjunction with this program, the Trustees gathered and researched the names and resumés of almost one hundred conference women many of whom are still doing work of note in the U.M.W. These names now fill three scrapbooks which are in the Service Center at the Conference office where others can read about some of the outstanding United Methodist Women who have and still are at work making history in the name of Jesus Christ. Let us not forget them.

#### ENDNOTE

1. North, Louise McCoy, *The Story of the N.Y. Branch of the WFMS of the M.E. Church*, New York, N.Y. Branch, 1923.

### JOHN WESLEY'S PAMPHLETS WRITINGS ON HUMAN RIGHTS, LIBERTY AND THE ABOLITION OF SLAVERY

by  
Franklin Elwood Perkins

John Wesley was sixty-five years old and had been preaching up and down England for nearly thirty years before he ventured into political controversy. However, when the people of Middlesex county at a general election in 1768 had returned the popular John Wilkes to parliament and mobs had created considerable rioting upon his arrest, placarding likenesses of their hero upon "the signboards of half the public houses in the kingdom"<sup>1</sup> John Wesley moved to write a letter which he later published in pamphlet form under the title, "Free Thoughts on the Present State of Public Affairs. In a Letter to a Friend, written in the Year 1768."<sup>2</sup> He writes:

"I am no politician; politics lie quite out of my province" . . . "I only use the privilege of an Englishman, to speak my naked thoughts; setting down just what appears to me to be the truth, till I have better information . . . and that without any art or colouring." He shares the fears of a Lord Chief Justice that if Commons should rescind Wilkes expulsion "public encouragement" would be given to the "proceedings" of the people who "are violent enough already," and as a result "anarchy and confusion" would result. "Unless a higher hand interpose" the commotions would make the land "a field of blood;" and "many thousands of poor Englishmen will sheathe their swords in each other's bowels." The end will be "King Wilkes or King Mob." He defends the character of the King and lays the lack of peace in the realm to the general neglect of religion, calling all God-fearing people to "humiliation and repentence!"

The disturbed state of affairs continued for some months even years. "Wilkes and Liberty" became the popular cry throughout England, and Wesley took it upon himself to examine "Liberty." As a result he wrote a twenty-one page pamphlet published in 1772 under the title, "Thoughts Upon Liberty."<sup>3</sup>

In discussing the various kinds of liberty he asks, "What is that liberty, properly so-called, which every wise and good man desires? It is either religious or civil. Religious liberty is a liberty to choose our own religion, to worship God according to our own conscience, according to

the best light we have. Every man living, as man, has a right to this, as he is a rational creature. The Creator gave him this right when he endowed him with understanding. And every man must judge for himself, because every man must give an account of himself to God. Consequently this is an indefensible right; it is inseparable from humanity. And God did never give authority to any man, or number of men, to deprive any child of man thereof, under any colour or pretence whatever."<sup>4</sup> "What is civil liberty? A liberty to enjoy our lives and fortunes in our own way; to use our property, whatever is legally our own, according to our own choice."

He excoriates those who talk of their liberties being endangered. "Hark! Is hell or Bedlam broke loose? What roaring is that, loud as the waves of the sea? 'It is the patriot mob! What do they want with me? Why do they flock about my house? 'Make haste! illuminate your windows in honour of Mr. Wilkes! I cannot in conscience; I think it is encouraging vice. 'Then will they all be broken! . . . Here are champions for the laws of the land! for liberty and property! O vile house-guards!"<sup>5</sup> Concluding he says, "We enjoy at this day throughout these kingdoms such liberty, civil and religious, as no other kingdom or commonwealth in Europe, or in the world, enjoys; and such as our ancestors never enjoyed from the Conquest to the Revolution. Let us be thankful for it to God and the King! . . ."<sup>6</sup>

Still another pamphlet was published in the same year, entitled "Thoughts Concerning the Origin of Power."<sup>7</sup> It is much more undemocratic than the earlier document. He refutes the ideas that the people of the state are the origin of power and have an inherent, self-evident right, inseparable from human nature to choose their own governors, since all are naturally free and equal. "Who are the people?" he asks of them, and points out by way of answer that "by the people they mean scarce a tenth part of them," for minors and women do not possess that right of choice. Such choice is not an inherent right "to every partaker of human nature." "None ever did maintain this, nor probably ever will." "We have no single instance in above seven hundred years of the people of England conveying the supreme power either to one or more persons." The power of the sword, the right to take life, does not, for example, belong to any man, only to God the Creator of life. "No man can give to another a right which he never had himself; a right which only the Governor of the world has." "Now, I cannot but acknowledge, I believe an old book, commonly called the Bible, to be true. Therefore I believe, there is no power but from God: the powers that be are ordained to God. (Rom. XIII,1.) There is no subordinate power in any

nation, but what is derived from the supreme power therein. So in England, the king, in the United Provinces the states are the fountain of all power. And there is no supreme power, no power of the sword, of life and death, but what is derived from God, the Sovereign of all."

## II.

One of the noblest of all of Wesley's writing is his pamphlet, "Thoughts Upon Slavery" (Published in the Year 1774).<sup>8</sup> Wesley had been one of the earliest advocates of out-lawing the slave traffic, lending the force of his influence against it in a very definite way some fifteen years before the organization of the Society for the Suppression of the Slave Trade, headed by William Wilberforce and Thomas Clarkson. To him the traffic in human lives was "that execrable sum of all villainies." Wesley's pamphlet is most carefully gotten together and presented. No argument or excuse for the business is left without complete and devastating refutation.

The downright humanity of Wesley breathes through his words as he describes the bondage in which the blacks lived. "When the vessels arrive at their destined port, the negroes are again exposed naked to the eye of all that flock together, and the examination of their purchasers. Then they are separated to the plantations of their several masters, to see each other no more. Here you may see mothers hanging over their daughters, bedewing their naked breasts with tears, and daughters clinging to their parents, till the whipper soon obliges them to part. And what can be more wretched than the condition they then enter upon? Banished from their country, from their friends and relations forever, from every comfort of life, they are reduced to a state scarce anyway preferable to that of breasts of burden. In general, a few roots, not of the nicest kind, usually yams or potatoes, are their food; and two rags, that neither screen them from the heat of the day, nor the cold of the night, their covering. Their sleep is very short, their labor continual, and frequently above their strength; so that death sets many of them at liberty before they have lived out half of their days. The time they work in the West Indies, is from day-break to noon, and from two o'clock till dark; during which time they are attended by overseers, who, if they think them dilatory, or think anything no so well done as it should be, whip them most unmercifully, so that you may see their bodies wealed and scarred usually from the shoulders to the waist. And before they are suffered to go to their quarters, they have commonly something to do, as collecting herbage for the horses, or gathering fuel for the boilers; so

that it is often past twelve before they can get home. Hence if their food is not prepared, they are sometimes called to labour again, before they can satisfy their hunger. And no excuse will avail. If they are not in the field immediately they must expect to feel the lash. Did the Creator intend that the noblest creatures in the visible world should live such a life as this?"<sup>9</sup> "I strike at the root of this complicated villainy, I absolutely deny all slave holding to be consistent with any degree of natural justice," Wesley continues.<sup>10</sup>

Slavery "violates all the laws of justice, mercy, and truth. No circumstances can make it necessary for a man to burst in sunder all the ties of humanity. It can never be necessary for a rational being to sink himself below a beast."<sup>11</sup> To the merchants he appeals "Be you a man, not a wolf, a devourer of the human species!"<sup>12</sup> "It cannot be, that either war, or contract, can give any man such a property in another as he has in his sleep and oxen." Finally, Wesley claims for each human being his natural right to liberty. It is not right "that any child of man should ever be born a slave. Liberty is the right of every human creature, as soon as he breathes the vital air; and no human law can deprive him of that right which he derives from the law of nature." "If, therefore, you have any regard to justice, (to say nothing of mercy, nor the revealed law of God,) render unto all their due. Give liberty to whom liberty is due, that is, to every partaker of human nature. Let none serve you by his own act and deed, by his own voluntary choice. Away with all whips, all chains, all compulsion! Be gentle toward all men; and see that you invariably do unto every one as you would he should do unto you."<sup>13</sup>

A letter written on February 26, 1791 to Mr. William Wilberforce in the Parliament by Mr. Wesley only four days before his death proves his unabated concern for justice to the blacks, and for the abolition of the slave trade. "Go on," he writes, "in the name of God and in the power of his might, till even the American slavery (the vilest that ever saw the sun) shall vanish away before it."

This valuable letter may be seen in the Methodist archives at Drew University, Madison, N.J.

#### ENDNOTES

1. Tyerman, *Life and Times of John Wesley*, III. 37.
2. *The Works of the Reverend John Wesley*, VI. (New York, 1831), 247-260.
3. *The Works*, VI, 261-269.
4. op. cit., 263.
5. *Works*, VI, 266.
6. op. cit., 269.
7. op. cit., 269-274.
8. *Works*, VI, 278-293.
9. *Works*, VI, 284-285.
10. op. cit., 286.
11. *Works*, VI, 288.
12. op. cit., 292.
13. op. cit., 292-293.

## A HISTORY OF THE MT. ZION UNITED METHODIST CHURCH OF MANTUA TOWNSHIP, NEW JERSEY

by  
Rev. David Engelbrecht

Mt. Zion United Methodist Church has a glorious and rich history of service to the Lord Jesus Christ. The Church was one of the first to be organized by the new Methodist Protestant denomination. The Methodist Protestant denomination was organized in Baltimore in 1828 as a reform movement in Methodism. Fortunately, Mt. Zion Church has excellent and unbroken books of records dating to the very earliest days of the Church. The following concerning the beginning of the Church is quoted from the earliest Church Register:

"In the year 1829 a few persons, about twenty, perhaps, began holding class meetings in Emlin School House and sometime during the following year organized under the Discipline of the Methodist Protestant Church, which denomination was just beginning to be established at the time."

The Emlin School House referred to was a public school located on the Richwood-Barnsboro Road, immediately north of Mt. Zion Church. It was a simple, one-story, wooden structure surrounded by a grove of oak trees. The infant society formed here in 1829 was served by circuit-riding preachers. The people would gather whenever the circuit-rider made his way to the neighborhood. Issues of the *Woodbury Constitution* (the county newspaper) in the 1840's frequently refer to outdoor revival services known as "Woods Meetings" held in the grove surrounding the schoolhouse.

Between visits of the circuit-riding preachers, the task of keeping "the flock" together was the responsibility of the Class Leader. Regular meetings were led by the Class Leader who took a personal interest in the physical and spiritual welfare of each member of the Class. At these Class Meetings, the Class Leader would often ask each Member present to give a brief account or "testimony" of their spiritual struggles during the past week.

According to one History of Gloucester County, from 1829 to 1852, the Worship Services of the Mt. Zion Methodist Protestant Church were held in private homes and even barns as well as the Emlin School House. The earliest Church Register states: "The Society thus formed became a part of the Glassboro Circuit. In 1846, it separated from Glassboro, and after standing alone for about one year became con-

nected with Bridgeport and Clementon. This arrangement continued only about two years when Bridgeport was severed. Clementon and Mt. Zion continued as a circuit until 1863, when Clementon was separated, to be united with other appointments."

In 1867, the Westville Methodist Protestant Church was organized and connected with Mt. Zion until 1885. The same year, the Church at Hardingville was placed with Mt. Zion and remained as a circuit for four years. In 1889, the newly-organized church at Pitman became a part of the Barnsboro Circuit, separated in 1895 when Mt. Zion continued alone. In 1929, Mt. Zion was again connected with Hardingville to form a circuit. In 1939, following the unification of the three great branches of American Methodism into the Methodist Church, Mt. Zion and Barnsboro were joined together to form a Charge. This arrangement has remained since that time.

Although the Society at Mt. Zion was organized in 1829, it was not until some years later that the erection of a church building was felt to be necessary. In 1842, Mr. John Dilks donated one acre of ground for a house of worship. The cornerstone of the church was laid in 1850, but the building was not finished until 1852. What a time of rejoicing it must have been for this little band of Methodists to have a church home after meeting for twenty-three years in homes, a school-house, and barns! In gratitude to Almighty God they called their Church "Mount Zion," in commemoration of the Holy Hill upon which God commanded his Temple to be built.

The church building has been in constant use since 1852 with virtually no change in its original structure. In keeping with the style favored by the Methodist Protestants, the structure was plain and simple without a belfry. In so doing, they recalled the advice of Francis Asbury who stated: "Let all our chapels be plain and decent, no more expensive than is absolutely unavoidable; otherwise, the need of raising money will make rich men necessary to us." Mt. Zion Church is the oldest church building in use in Mantua Township, Gloucester County.

The Church Register records only four charter members who established the first class: Rebecca Danford, David B. Schoch, Ann Schoch and Hannah Ackley. Fifteen more names were added to the roll before the church was dedicated in 1852. They were Rachel Hutchinson, James H. Hutchinson, Sr., Samuel F. Medara, Abigail Chew, Samuel D. Chew, Mary Brown, Rachel Kates, Sarah Schoch, Thomas D. Clark, Harriet Shreve, Elias Brown, Jesse S. Chew, William Danford, Elisha Pancoast, and Sarah J. Sharp. By 1883, the membership had risen to 70 and continued to grow to a peak of 129 in the 1894

Report. Mt. Zion has never been a large church but has always been a good "mother" church, planting the seed of the Gospel in the lives of many in its community through the decades. Many of the men and women prominent in the early history of Mantua Township were worshippers at Mt. Zion Church.

In the Church Register, Rev. John L. Watson, Pastor, writes an eloquent eulogy for one of the charter members: "David B. Schoch, deceased June 24th, 1891. He was a good man and feared God above many. He was eleven years older to the Methodist Protestant Church than the New Jersey Conference was old owing to the fact that he joined the Church when the Barnsboro appointment was supplied by the New York and other conferences. He lived a Godly life and left this world to share the bliss of that blessed country where none are sick and the word goodbye will not be heard." Such a eulogy reflects the spiritual fervor and dedication found among the charter membership which spurred the church on to growth.

Strong interest in mission work has remained a characteristic of Mt. Zion Church for many years. Early organizations such as The Mite Society and the W.F.M.S (Women's Foreign Missionary Society, organized in 1897) raised thousands of dollars for mission work through the years. A former member of the Church, Mrs. Theresa Hurff Hurley, spent several decades as a missionary to the Amazon Indians at Iquitos, Peru.

The church building was repaired and slightly remodeled in 1877. In 1865, 1877, 1882 and 1916 other pieces of ground adjacent to the church property were acquired. A cemetery was established shortly after the erection of the church building. There are numerous grave markers of significant age, particularly the two Civil War soldiers who markers can be found close to the back wall of the church building. A separate Mt. Zion Cemetery Association was established when on February 24, 1931, the Church Trustees conveyed one and ninety hundredths acres to the Cemetery Association. During a recent survey of the property adjacent to the Church and Cemetery, the old original marking stones were discovered and partially excavated by the Surveyor.

During recent decades, various improvements have been made to the Church to enhance its convenience and usefulness. However, these improvements have been made with care to preserve the original simplicity and beauty of the Church. In 1953, the sanctuary was beautified by the addition of beautiful stained glass memorial windows and new pulpit furnishings. In 1954, as a memorial for Lt. Mortimer Cox Jr., who lost his life in the Korean War, a new chancel rail and vestibule doors were

dedicated. In 1955, the old Church Parsonage on Main Street in Barnsboro was sold and a fine new home was erected on the Richwood-Barnsboro Road. Through the hard work and dedicated support of the membership, the cost of this home was subscribed in just a few years.

In the Autumn of 1979, the Mt. Zion Church was heavily damaged by a fire which apparently started in an electrical lighting fixture to the left of the front door. The fire spread through a gap between the exterior and foyer wall and spread to the roof. The Church was extensively damaged at the entrance and the roof. The main portion of the sanctuary also sustained heavy water damage. Pans were placed in several spots to catch water dripping through the ceiling. The Church benches were covered with a tarp to prevent damage and several items such as chairs and the altar were removed during the fire.

The congregation faced this crisis with courage and determination. Services normally held at the Church were moved to the Barnsboro United Methodist Church. Insurance proceeds were adequate to complete repairs to the sanctuary, and it was a glad day when the congregation was able to meet once again in its beautiful meeting place!

Present church membership stands at 61. In addition, there are numerous friends and former members of the Church in many parts of the U.S.A. who consider "Old Mt. Zion" their "home Church." The Church is in sound financial condition and free from all indebtedness, largely due to the faithful support of her members and friends. Sunday School for all ages was re-established again in September, 1982, after being discontinued for several years. Present Sunday School enrollment stands at 31.

We celebrated the 154th Anniversary of this historic church in 1983, and we rejoice in the accomplishments of the past. We also approach the future with hope, knowing that the Lord of the Church, Jesus Christ, "is the same yesterday, today, and forever."

This paper was originally written in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Master of Divinity degree at Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

## HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWS

The purpose of the Historical Society, as stated in the Constitution, is "to promote interest in the study and preservation of the history of the Conference and its antecedents, and to assist and support the Annual Conference Commission on Archives and History in carrying out its Disciplinary duties, as requested." A revised Constitution was adopted at the 1984 annual meeting, increasing the size of the Executive Committee by adding District representatives, thus involving more persons in actively promoting the historical interests of the Conference.

Our major focus of concern has been the preparation of the Conference History. The first draft was written by the Historian and typed by his wife during a 1984 summer study leave. The Editorial Committee, Dr. J. Hillman Coffee, Chairman, Dr. Andrew C. Braun, Mr. Lloyd C. Griscom, Mrs. Betty Hawk and Mrs. Penny Moore read the manuscript and met with the author on January 3, 1985. The final copy is being prepared as this is being written. Mrs. Miriam Coffee is reading it for grammatical accuracy prior to the final copy being typed. The entire manuscript of what will be about a 350 page book is to be placed in the publisher's hands in July. Publication date is June 1986, the date of the 150th Anniversary of the Conference.

A pre-publication sale of the history will begin on or about January 1, 1986. You are encouraged to purchase a copy and ask others to do so. A copy should be in each local church and churches are encouraged to place a copy in local libraries. The publication of this history will take the place of *The Historical Trail* for 1986. Look for the next issue of this publication in 1987. Manuscripts, suggestions and ideas should be sent to the Editor.

Two recent additions to the Conference Archives are a framed Deacon's and Elder's ordination certificates of the Rev. John Walker, signed by Bishop Francis Asbury and dated May 31, 1804 and April 18, 1806. Rev. Walker was a native of New Jersey and charter member of the New Jersey Conference. The certificates are a gift of the preacher's great grandson, Mr. Carl Walker Gaskill of Bridgeton.

The second addition is the complete record of the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society of the Bridgeton District from 1888 to 1940. Included is a summary of the founding of many of the local societies.

Your support of the work of your Historical Society is most helpful. Dues are \$4.00 a year per person or \$6.00 a couple. Benjamin Abbott

Life Memberships are \$50.00 per individual or church. Please send your dues to Mrs. Edna Molyneaux, 768 East Garden Road, Vineland, N.J. 08360.

REV. ROBERT B. STEELMAN  
*Historian*

### HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF THE SOUTHERN NEW JERSEY ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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#### **EDITOR'S NOTE**

See page 11, "It has just been learned that Mrs. Dallas Lore was born Rebecca Toy, daughter of Isaiah Toy of Palmyra, N.J. She was a grand niece of Joseph Toy, one of the first Methodists in New Jersey." Information from Lloyd E. Griscom. See also the 1984 issue of *The Historical Trail*, pp. 12-17.



A GOOD EXAMPLE of 19th century meeting house architecture is Mount Zion Methodist Church in Barnsboro which uses the same narrow pew benches that were installed 100 years ago. (From *Courier-Post*, Camden, N.J., Sat., Jan. 15, 1966)